

## **Testimony for March 11, 1030am for the Appropriations Public Health Committee**

Dear Senator Gerratana, Senator Ritter, Senator Riley, Representative Formica, Representative Ryan and members of the Public Health Committee:

My name is Rayallen Bergman and I am the Program Coordinator and Substance Abuse Prevention Specialist with the Southeastern Regional Action Council based in Southeastern CT.

I am writing to you as members of the Appropriations Public Health Committee to voice my concerns on **H.B. No. 6283 AN ACT REGULATING ELECTRONIC CIGARETTES.**

E-Cigarettes are not a healthy alternative to Cigarette use. I work directly with youth in a few settings, and the attitudes they convey from their peers, is that E-cigarettes are safe and have no dangerous chemicals. This attitude is incorrect, yet the information that is out there is limited. I have found that many of these products contain varying cocktails of chemicals to initiate the vaporizing of the nicotine in these delivery systems. Most electronic cigarettes contain about the same amount of nicotine as a regular analog cigarette. A recent study was published in the New England Journal of Medicine found that e-cigarette users were exposed to 5 - 15 times more formaldehyde than cigarettes smokers. Without the warnings on this product, the information regarding the dangers of these products remains limited.

Rates of youth cigarette use have steadily declined to 6% in our region in 2013 but our recent tracking of E-cigarette use has a baseline of 11% in Southeastern CT. We have surveyed nearly 20, 000 youth, from 7-12<sup>th</sup> grade in our region from 2006-2014. Currently, 6% of our youth have said "yes" to using a cigarette at least one time, throughout their lifetime. This percentage has steadily declined from its highest rate of 14% in 2009. However, we have just added e-cigarettes to our survey and our regional baseline data begins at 11% of our youth have used an E-cigarette at least one time.

We have worked so hard over the years to battle the tobacco companies marketing campaigns which target young adults and youth, and we can see these same strategies used for E-Cigarettes. E-Cigarettes can come in various flavors. Flavored cigarettes were banned for their attraction to youth, alongside marketing with cartoon characters and enticing packaging. These are the current ploys of e-cigarettes, and the implemented restrictions to cigarettes do not apply to these nicotine delivery systems. These restrictions need to be added to maintain the health of our general public and the impact these products will have on our youth.

Please take the steps to ensure the safety of the residents in our region and state.

Thank you

Rayallen Bergman, B.S.